

Message Text

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42

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07 COA-01 CG-00 DOTE-00

DLOS-03 SCA-01 SCS-03 /063 W
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O R 102019Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4390

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 0990

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EFIS, PLOS, PFOR, EC

SUBJECT: TUNA BOAT SEIZURES: SHOOTING INCIDENT ABOARD "OCEAN QUEEN"

1. AT APPROXIMATELY 08:00AM LOCAL TIME FEBRUARY 10TH, A SHOOTING INCIDENT OCCURRED ABOARD THE "OCEAN QUEEN, ONE OF SEVEN US TUNA BOATS PRESENTLY DETAINED IN SALINAS. ACCORDING TO THE ACCOUNT GIVEN TO US CONSUL IRA LEVY, AN ECUADOREAN NAVY GUARD, POSTED ABOARD THE VESSEL, WENT BERSERK AND FIRED EIGHT ROUNDS INTO THE CEILING OF THE SHIP'S CHART ROOM. THERE WERE NO INJURIES. LEVY ARRIVED ABOARD THE BOAT AS THE SHIP'S CAPTAIN, RUSSELL J. CASEMERO, WAS PEAKING WITH THE US COAST GUARD IN MIAMI (AS REQUIRED BY COAST GUARD REGULATIONS). CONSUL LEVY ALSO SPOKE WITH COAST GUARD.

2. CONSUL GENERAL DEWITT, IN THE TEMPORARY BRANCH OFFICE IN SALINAS, REPORTED THE INCIDENT TO THE PROT CAPTAIN AND TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE ECUADOREAN NAVY GUARD. THE ECUADOREAN NAVY HAS NOT YET REPORTED ON ITS INTERROGATION OF THE GUARD INVOLVED FOR HIS VERSION OF THE STORY. DEWITT IS ASKING THE CAPTAIN OF THE "OCEAN QUEEN" TO WRITE A MEMORANDUM OF HIS ACCOUNT FOR FILING WITH THE PORT CAPTAIN. LEVY HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO REMAIN ABOARD THE "OCEAN
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QUEEN" FOR THE TIME BEING.

3. WE ARE SENDING ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL TO SALINAS TO BE BETTER PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES. ADCM HAS SPOKEN TO SENIOR ECUADOREAN NAVY OFFICER IN QUITO TO RE-INFORCE OUR EARLIER REQUEST THAT BETTER QUALIFIED GUARDS BE ASSIGNED TO THE SHIPS, AND THAT THEY BE SELECTED WITH GREATER CARE IN AN EFFORT TO PREVENT A RECURRENCE OF THIS SORT OF INCIDENT. NAVATT IS FOLLOWING UP WITH HIS CONTACTS. IN ADDITION, WE ARE ASKING THE EN TO PROVIDE RADIOS ABOARD THE VESSELS FOR SHIP-TO SHORE COMMUNICATION, PRESENTLY ABSENT. IN FACT, LEVY DISCOVERED THE INCIDENT BY ACCIDENT AS HE BOARDED THE SHIP ON OTHER BUSINESS TWO HOURS LATER.

4. COMMENT: THE SITUATION IN SALINAS IS POTENTIALLY VOLATILE BECAUSE OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE GUARDS AND SHIPS' CREWMEN. THE GUARDS SPEAK NO ENGLISH; THE CREWS LITTLE SPANISH. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF THEFTS CONDUCTED BY THE GUARDS, MOST OF WHOM ARE QUITE YOUNG AND WHO HAVE, UP TO THIS POINT, BEEN STANDING LONG (UP TO TWELVE HOURS) WATCHES WITH LITTLE GUIDANCE FROM THEIR SENIORS. IN ADDITION, THERE HAS BEEN TALK AMONG THE FISHING BOAT CAPTAINS OF EITHER DESTROYING THE CATCH (SUCH AS BY POURING KEROSENE DOWN THE HOLDS), OR EVEN BOLTING FOR OPEN SEAS IN AN ESCAPE ATTEMPT. UNTIL A DECISION IS REACHED UPON PAYMENT OF FINES AND DISPOSITION OF THE CATCH (I.E., UNTIL THERE IS A DEFINITE PROSPECT IN SIGHT FOR DEPARTURE OF THE BOATS), THE SITUATION IS LIKELY TO REMAIN VOLATILE.
BREWSTER

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Message Attributes

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